"The Great Minquas Path, the 1680s Benjamin Chambers Survey,
and Present-Day Delaware County, Pennsylvania"
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Great Minquas (Susquehannock) Path
The 17th-century trade route crossed Ridley Creek near this point. It ran 80 miles, from the palisaded towns of the Susquehannock Nation along the lower Susquehanna through the Lenape Nation to the Schuylkill near its confluence with the Delaware. The Susquehannock used the trail to trade beaver pelts, first with Dutch, then Swedish, then English merchants, for metal tools and cookware.
Rose Valley's remnant of the Great Minquas Path is a reminder of our forebears on this land – the Lenape, whose members still have a vibrant presence here as the Lenape Nation of Pennsylvania, and the Susquehannock, whose voices are lost to history.
Illustration of a Susquehannock man in a bearskin mantle with a bow and club, from John Smith's 1624 map of Virginia (which included present-day Maryland, Delaware, and Pennsylvania). The label reads: "The Sasquesahanougs are a Gyant like people & thus attired." Smith wrote, "Such great and well proportioned men, are seldom scene, for they seemed like Giants to the English."
ROSE VALLEY E.A.C.
Photo taken by the author of signage erected in the Chadwick Wildlife Preserve, a wooded open space tucked into Long Point, along Ridley Creek, in Rose Valley, Delaware County, Pennsylvania.

The Great Minquas Path was an important Native American trade route that stretched from the Susquehanna River to the Schuylkill River in present-day Philadelphia. The path is thought to have passed through present-day Delaware County, Pennsylvania, before continuing eastward through the area of today's 7700 Holstein Avenue in Philadelphia.

This path was used by the people commonly called the Minquas in Swedish and Dutch records during the New Sweden period, and who later became widely known as the Susquehannocks. In this article, they will be referred to as the Minquas when discussing the New Sweden period. Unlike the neighboring Lenape, who spoke an Algonquian language, the Minquas spoke an Iroquoian language.

During the New Sweden period (1638–1655), the Swedes and Finns shared a reciprocal trading relationship with the Minquas. But by 1655, though trade with the Minquas was still occurring, the

Swedes were beginning to lose some of that trade. In a letter dated June 14, 1655, Governor Johan Risingh, the last governor of New Sweden before the Dutch takeover, wrote that the Lenape had threatened to ruin the Swedes' trade with the Minquas and that the Swedes had to maintain their friendship with the Lenape through presents. Risingh also wrote that the English were drawing the Minquas toward Virginia by paying them more than the Swedes could afford. This shows that the Minquas trade was still active in 1655, but some of it was beginning to shift away from the Delaware River.[1]

In the years that followed, warfare, disease, and displacement further disrupted this relationship and led to the decline of the Susquehannocks (Minquas). Many of the survivors later settled at Conestoga Town in present-day Lancaster County, near the Susquehanna River, where they became known as the Conestoga. In December 1763, the last remaining Conestoga living under Pennsylvania's protection were massacred by the Paxton Boys, bringing an end to the Conestoga community in Pennsylvania.

A survey was prepared by Benjamin Chambers for William Penn in 1688/1689, following the terms of a July 30, 1685 deed from Native chiefs Skakahoppoh, Secane, Malibor, and Tangoras, identified in the document as "Indian Sakemakers" and the rightful owners of the land. The deed conveyed a tract lying between "Macopanackan, als [alias] Upland, now called Chester River or Creek, and the River or Creek of Pemapecka, now called Dublin Creek," and extending backward into the woods, described as follows:

"Beginning at the hill called Conshohockin, on the River Manaiunck or Skoolkill, from thence extends in a parallel line to the said Macopanackan, als Chester Creek, by a southwesterly course, and from the said Conshohockin hill to ye aforesaid Pemapecka, als Dublin Creek, by ye said parallel line North-Easterly, and so up along ye said Pemapecka Creek so far as the Creek extends, and so from thence North-Westerly back into ye Woods, to make up Two full Daies Journey, as far as a man can go in Two Dayes from the said Station of ye said Parallel line at Pemapecka, also beginning at the said parallel at Macopanackan, als Chester Creek, and so from thence up the said creek as far as it extends; and from thence north-westerly back into the Woods to make up Two full Dayes Journey, as far as a man can go in Two Dayes from the said Station of the said parallel line at ye said Macopanackan, als Chester Creek."[2]

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[1] Albert Cook Myers, *Narratives of Early Pennsylvania, West New Jersey, and Delaware* (1912), p. 157. Letter written by Governor Johan Risingh, the last governor of New Sweden, dated June 14, 1655: "...Our neighbors the Renappi [Lenape] threaten not only to kill our people in the land and ruin them, before we can become stronger and prevent such things, but also to destroy even the trade, both with the Minques [Minquas] and the other savage nations, as well as with the Christians. We must daily buy their friendship with presents, for they are and continue to be hostile, and worse than they have been hitherto. If they buy anything here, they wish to get half on credit, and then pay with difficulty. They run to the Minques [Minquas], and there they buy beavers and elkskins, etc., for our goods, and then they proceed before our eyes to Manathas, where the traders can pay more for them than we do, because more ships and more goods arrive there. Yet we associate with them to a certain extent, and they are fond of us, because we do not do them any harm or act hostile towards them. Otherwise, they would indeed ruin our cattle, yes probably the people on the land, as they vex them daily and take away whatever they can. Last winter one of them killed a woman not far from here and robbed what there was. Later indeed they promised that they would make amends for it, but have not as yet given more than ten fathoms of sevan. Then the English draw our people to themselves over to Virginia (Saverne) [Severn River, Annapolis, Maryland] as much as they are able and keep those who deserted thither last year. They largely ruin our trade with the Minques [Minquas], especially Scarboroug [Edmund Scarborough, died circa 1670, the leading planter on the eastern shore of Virginia] who gives them 7 to 8 lbs. of powder for one beaver, where we are accustomed to give at the highest from 3 to 4 lbs. and cannot give over 5 lbs. except at a loss."

[2] Henry D. Paxson, *Where Pennsylvania History Began* (1926), pp. 168–169.

If looking at the survey, take note of the two demolished forts along the Susquehanna, showing the Susquehannocks (Minquas) had already withdrawn from the region by the time of this 1688/1689 survey. Also take note of the clearly marked Native footpath, ending on the west side of Ridley Creek. Take note of the notation along the margin reading, "This rode beareth N.83.W being 68 miles from Philadelphia by Delaware to Susquehanna River." Also take note of "Swedes Mill" along Cobbs Creek as it branches off Darby Creek, built circa 1645 for New Sweden Governor Johan Printz. This survey is preserved by the Pennsylvania State Archives, Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission (PHMC).

An “Indian Path” is recorded on the survey extending to the west side of Ridley Creek, in the general vicinity of present-day Rose Valley. This has been interpreted as evidence for the Great Minquas Path passing through the area, although the survey does not identify the path by name or establish its exact route through present-day Rose Valley. No records have been found that specifically document the exact route of the Great Minquas Path through what is now Delaware County.

Much of the commonly accepted route of the Great Minquas Path through Delaware County is based on interpretations made by later historians, including Henry D. Paxson, George Smith, and Paul Wallace. All interpretations should be approached with caution. Paxson, for example, identified the stone ruins on the former property of Jonas Nilsson as the remains of a trading post and consequently associated the Great Minquas Path with that location.[3] Jonas Nilsson’s property included what is the vicinity of today’s 7700 Holstein Avenue. However, court minutes document that Nilsson had a threshing house on his property, indicating that the ruins were probably agricultural rather than those of a trading post.[4] There is also a chronological problem with the identification: Nilsson was not living in the area during much of the period when the Minquas trade was active.[5] Therefore, the supposed trading post cannot be relied upon as evidence for establishing the route or a terminus of the Great Minquas Path. So, what has traditionally been identified as a terminus near the supposed trading post of Jonas Nilsson may not have been a terminus at all. Instead, it may simply have been one point along a larger route that continued through present-day Philadelphia toward the Schuylkill and Delaware Rivers, allowing the Minquas to continue southeast toward the mouth of Big Timber Creek in present-day New Jersey. In fact, this was one of the reasons Governor Johan Printz established Fort Nya Korsholm: to intercept the Minquas trade and secure their business for the Swedes before the Minquas continued on to trade with the Dutch in the Big Timber Creek area. If so, the actual terminus of this particular branch of the Great Minquas Path may instead have been the point shown on the Chambers Survey, where the “Indian Path” ends on the west side of Ridley Creek in the general vicinity of present-day Rose Valley. It is thought that the path wound through the Long Point, Rose Valley area before continuing eastward across Delaware County toward the area of the later Blue Bell Tavern in Philadelphia.

What is certain, based on a letter written by Governor Johan Printz in 1647, is that the Great Minquas Path reached the area later occupied by the Blue Bell Tavern on Cobbs Creek. From there, the

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[3] Ibid., pp. 160–162.

[4] Historical Society of Pennsylvania, *The Record of the Court at Upland, Pennsylvania* (1860), p. 172. Court Minutes dated June 4, 1673, Kingsesse [Kingsessing, Philadelphia], state that “Jonas Nielson” had a “Thrashhouse.”

[5] Jonas Nilsson came to New Sweden in 1643 and was stationed in today’s Elsinboro, Salem County, New Jersey. It is thought that he did not relocate to Kingsessing, Philadelphia, until 1653, when he became a “freeman,” but that is up for debate. In 1654, he left the area for Sweden, and then returned to the area in 1656. At that point, the area was under Dutch control as part of New Netherland. Thus, the threshing house was probably not built until on or after 1656. The photos of the ruins in Henry D. Paxson’s book looks more like a threshing house than a trading post.

path continued south in the region of today's 7700 Holstein Avenue in Philadelphia.[6] However, without documentation, we cannot assume that the path from Rose Valley continued across Delaware County to the Blue Bell Tavern on Cobbs Creek. The path shown on the Chambers Survey ends on the west side of Ridley Creek. Nothing is drawn continuing eastward through Delaware County.

Thus, it is possible that one branch or terminus of the path was on the west side of Ridley Creek, possibly in the Rose Valley area. The Minquas may instead have traveled back northward along the trail, outside of present-day Delaware County, possibly into what is now Montgomery County. From there, another route could have taken them southward along the west side of the Schuylkill River toward the Blue Bell Tavern on Cobbs Creek (Molndal), and then onward to today's 7700 Holstein Avenue in Philadelphia. This is only a possibility, however, and cannot presently be documented.

The Lenape lived in wigwams throughout portions of Delaware County, north of the Swedish settlements closer to the Delaware River, and the Minquas and Lenape were at times engaged in conflict. The Minquas therefore may have sought to avoid routes through areas occupied by the Lenape. For this reason as well, we cannot simply assume that the path shown reaching Ridley Creek continued eastward across Delaware County to Philadelphia.

With all this said, a branch or terminus in the Rose Valley area does make sense. Since the Minquas and Lenape were at times engaged in conflict, and the Lenape had practiced slash-and-burn agriculture for centuries in the area of the present-day Pink Hill Serpentine Barren of Tyler Arboretum, the Minquas may have sought to avoid traveling too far east toward Pink Hill. Instead, the path may have turned southward before reaching that area, bringing it toward present-day Rose Valley.

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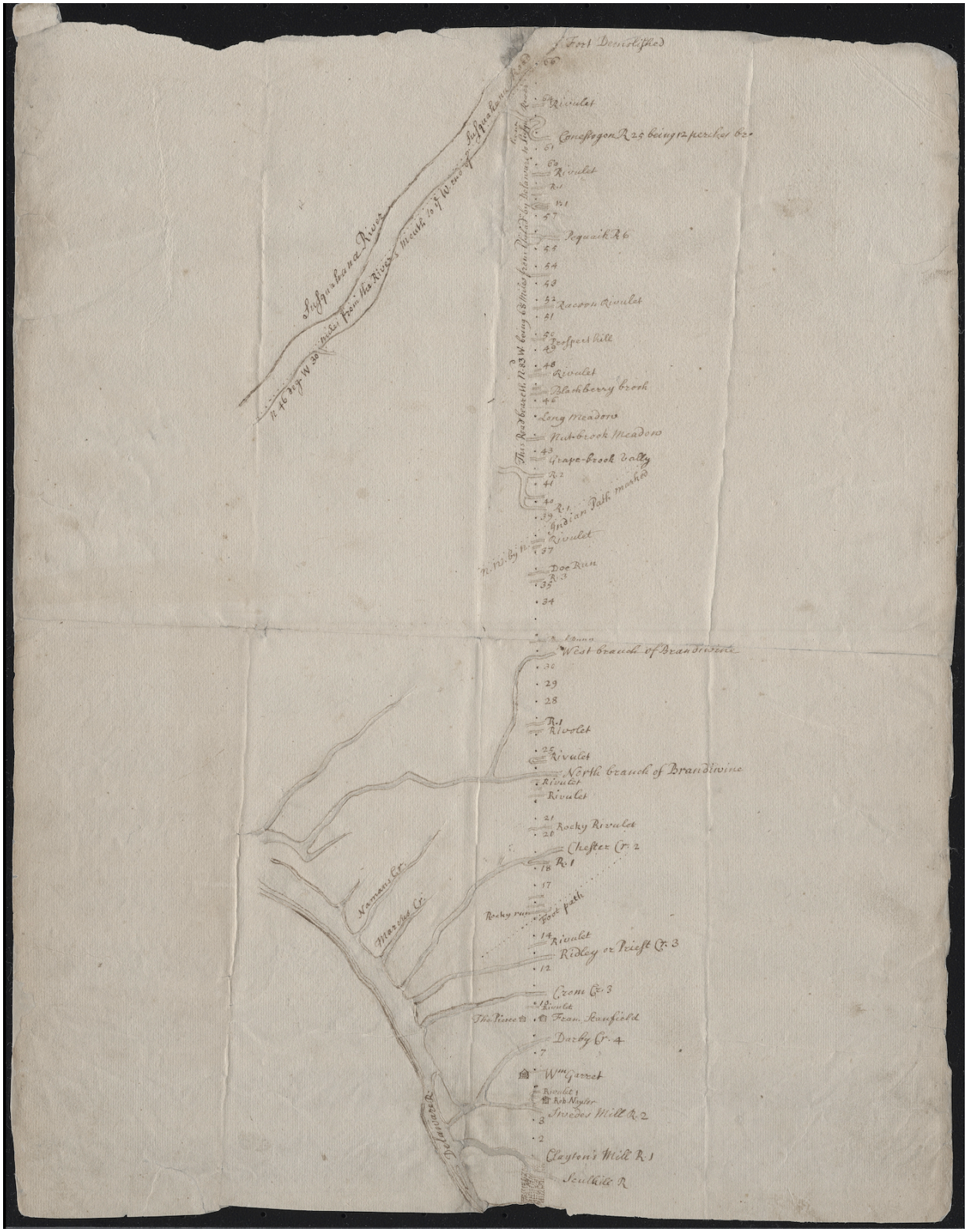
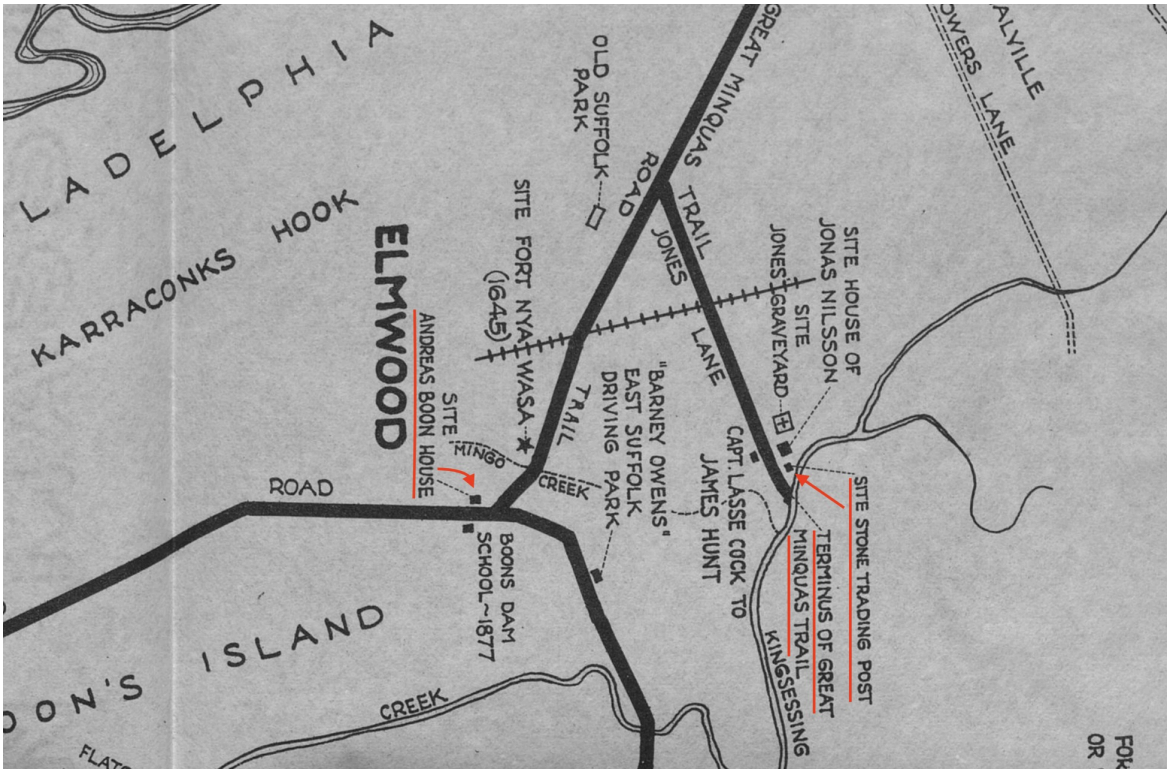
[6] Myers, *Narratives of Early Pennsylvania*, p. 122–123. On February 20, 1647, Governor Johan Printz wrote, "Again, I have caused a church to be built in New Gothenburg [today's Governor Printz Park, Essington, Delaware County, PA], decorating it according to our Swedish fashion, so far as our resources and means would allow. Also in the same place I have rebuilt a storehouse, for the provisions and as many cargoes as may be sold there on the Company's behalf. Further, to prejudice the trade of the Hollanders, I have built a fine house (called Wasa) [Wasa or Nya Vasa was in Philadelphia's Kingsessing. Look up 3751 Island Avenue, Philadelphia, to get in the general area] on the other side of Karsholm [Fort Nya Korsholm, alias Fort Manayunk, was in the general area of 7992 Penrose Ferry Road, Philadelphia], by the road of the Minquas, so strong that four or five men, well provided with guns, balls, and powder, will be able to defend themselves there against the savages; seven freemen, sturdy fellows, have settled in that place. Again, a quarter of a mile higher up [one and two-thirds English miles], by the said Minquas' road, I have built another strong house, five freemen settling there. This place I have called Molndal [on Cobbs Creek, by the Blue Bell Tavern, in the area of 7303 Woodland Avenue, Philadelphia] building there a watermill, which runs the whole year, to the great advantage of the country, particularly as the windmill, formerly here, before I came, would never work, and was good for nothing. Now, when the great traders, the Minquas, travel to the Dutch trading-place or house, Nassau [the Dutch Fort Nassau was located near the mouth of Big Timber Creek, Gloucester County, New Jersey, and the Delaware River] they are obliged to pass by those two places, which (please God) hereafter shall be provided with cargoes."

Benjamin Chambers Survey, obtained by the author from PHMC.

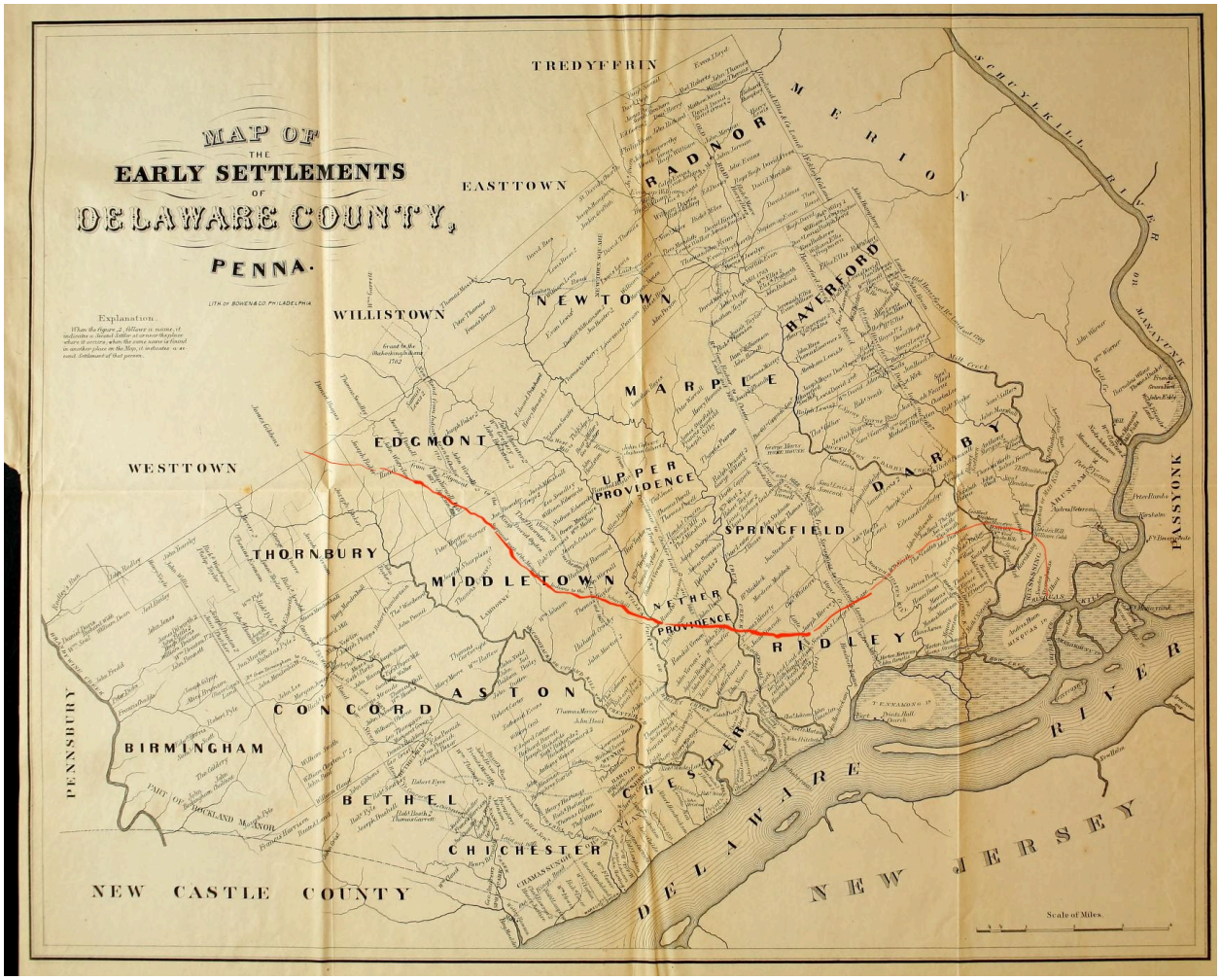


Benjamin Chambers Survey, obtained by the author from PHMC. As a point of reference, the Lower Swedish Cabin is in the vicinity of William Garrett's property. The rivulet drawn between Rocky Run and Ridley Creek may be Chrome Run. Swedes Mill on Cobbs Creek was in the vicinity of today's Blue Bell Tavern.

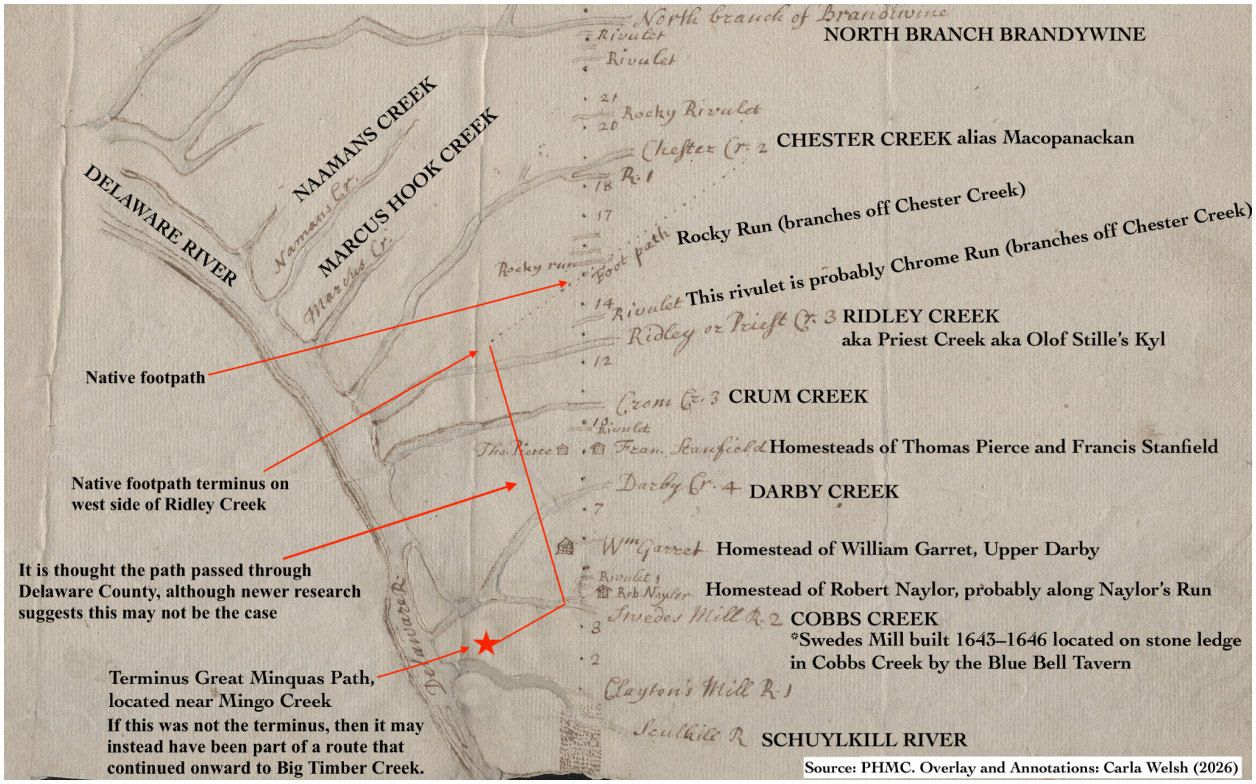


Portion of map, Henry D. Paxson, *Where Pennsylvania History Began*. Take note Paxson recorded the area of Jonas Nilsson's Stone Trading Post; however, that may have actually been a threshing house.

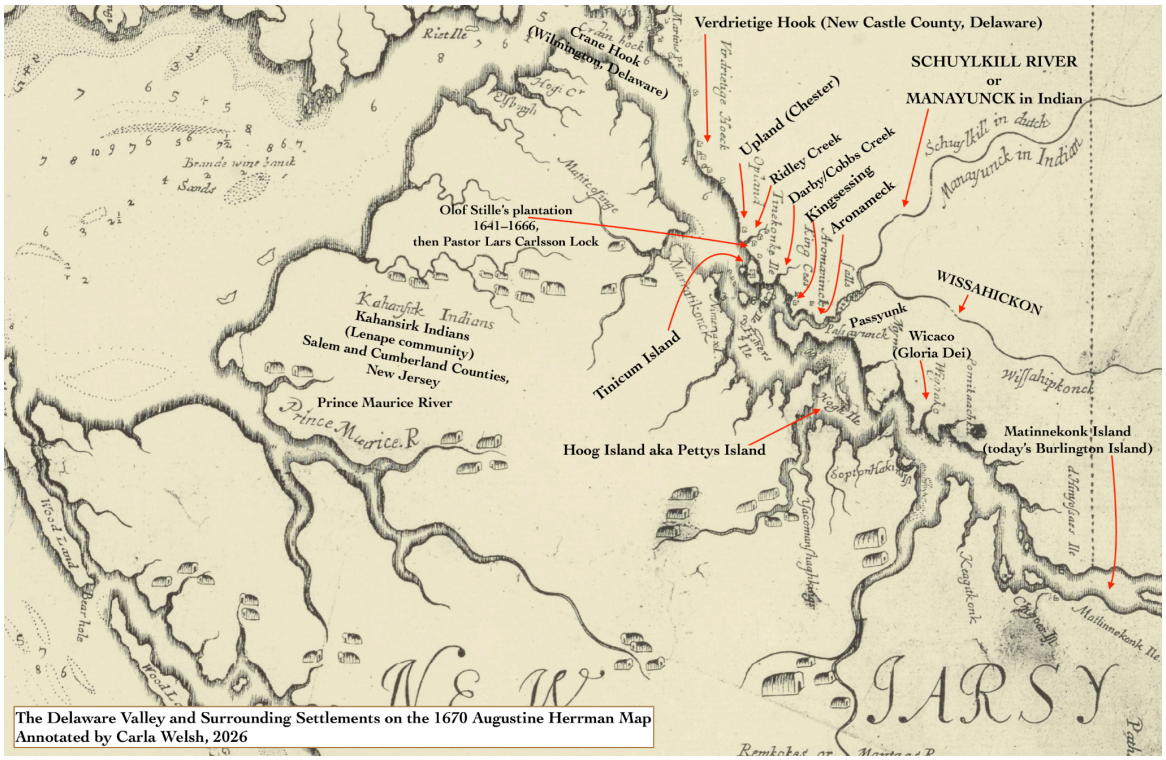
Photo taken by Henry D. Paxson, *Where Pennsylvania History Began*, of what he thought was the trading post, but it may actually be the threshing house ruins. Photo colorized by the author.



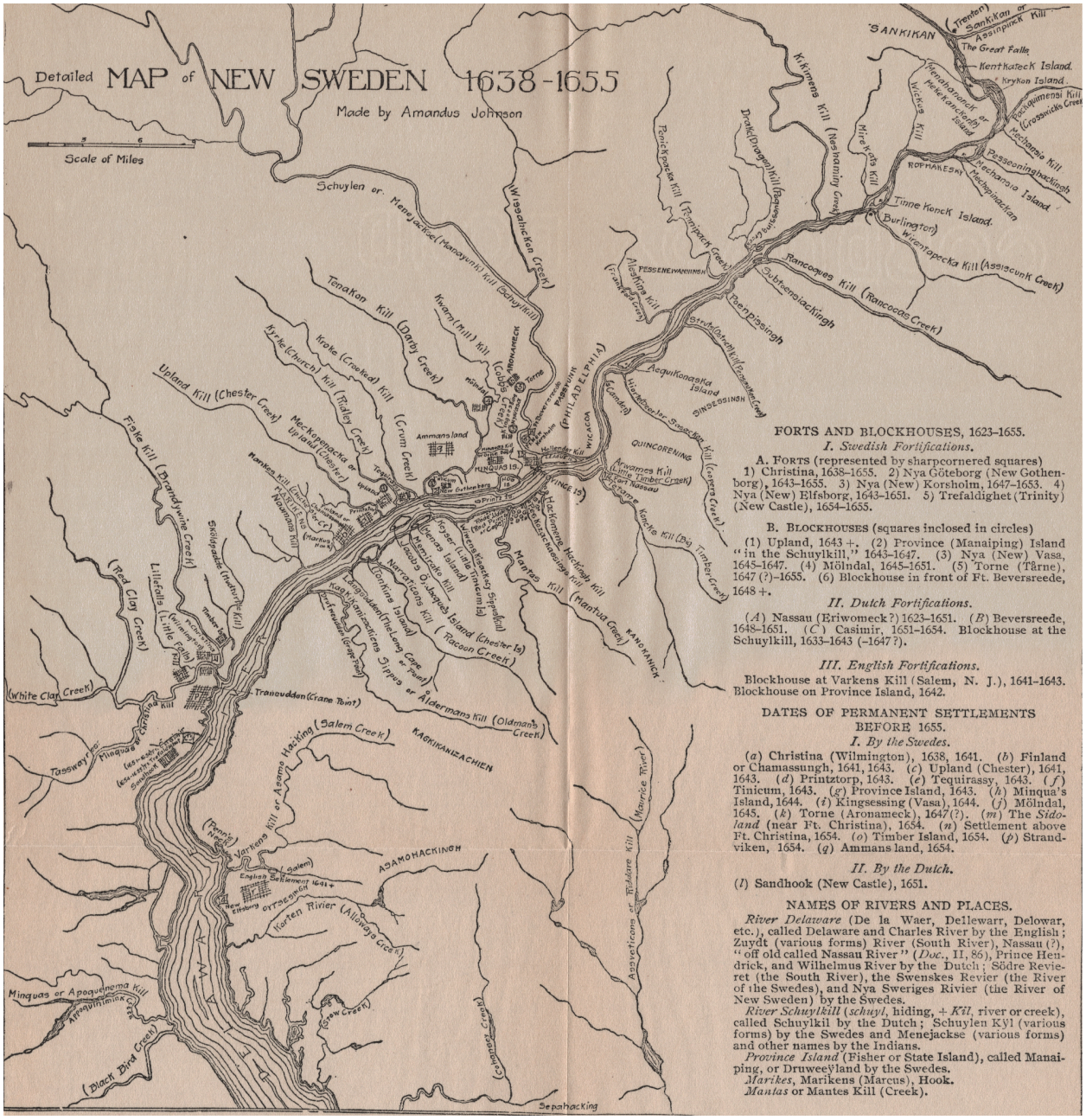
George Smith, *Map of the Early Settlements of Delaware County, Penna.* The map depicts George Smith's proposed route of the Great Minquas Path through Delaware County. The author has outlined Smith's route in red for clarity.


NORTH BRANCH BRANDYWINE
NAAMANS CREEK
MARCUS HOOK CREEK
DELAWARE RIVER
CHESTER CREEK alias Macopanackan
Rocky Run (branches off Chester Creek)
This rivulet is probably Chrome Run (branches off Chester Creek)
RIDLEY CREEK
aka Priest Creek aka Olof Stille's Kyl
CRUM CREEK
Homesteads of Thomas Pierce and Francis Stanfield
DARBY CREEK
Homestead of William Garret, Upper Darby
Homestead of Robert Naylor, probably along Naylor's Run
COBBS CREEK
*Swedes Mill built 1643–1646 located on stone ledge in Cobbs Creek by the Blue Bell Tavern
SCHUYLKILL RIVER
Native footpath
Native footpath terminus on west side of Ridley Creek
It is thought the path passed through Delaware County, although newer research suggests this may not be the case
Terminus Great Minquas Path, located near Mingo Creek
If this was not the terminus, then it may instead have been part of a route that continued onward to Big Timber Creek.
Source: PHMC. Overlay and Annotations: Carla Welsh (2026)

Portion of Benjamin Chambers survey showing today's Delaware County and Philadelphia, annotated by the author.


Verdrietige Hook (New Castle County, Delaware)
Crane Hook (Wilmington, Delaware)
SCHUYLKILL RIVER or MANAYUNCK in Indian
Upland (Chester)
Ridley Creek
Darby/Cobbs Creek
Kingsessing
Aronameck
Olof Stille's plantation 1641–1666, then Pastor Lars Carlsson Lock
WISSAHICKON
Passyunk
Wicaco (Gloria Dei)
Tinicum Island
Kahansirk Indians (Lenape community) Salem and Cumberland Counties, New Jersey
Prince Maurice River
Hoog Island aka Pettys Island
Matinnekonk Island (today's Burlington Island)
The Delaware Valley and Surrounding Settlements on the 1670 Augustine Herrman Map
Annotated by Carla Welsh, 2026

Portion of the 1670 Augustine Herrman Map, annotated by the author. Library of Congress. The author is a descendant of Olof Stille, who lived near the confluence of Ridley Creek and the Delaware River as early as 1641. In 1666, he relocated to Moyamensing, in the area of today's FDR Park in Philadelphia.


Detailed MAP of NEW SWEDEN 1638-1655
Made by Amandus Johnson
Scale of Miles
SANKIKAN
The Great Falls
Kentkatock Island.
Krykon Island.
Tinne Konck Island.
Burlington
ROPHAKESIN
Schuylen or Menejackse
Tenakon Kill (Darby Creek)
Upland Kill (Chester Creek)
Fiske Kill (Brandywine Creek)
Red Clay Creek
White Clay Creek
Lillefalls (Little Falls)
Traneuddan (Crane Point)
Tassaway Isle
Minquas or Apoquinoma Kill
Black Bird Creek
Varkens Kill or Asamo Hacking (Salem Creek)
KAGHKANIZACHIEN
ADAMOHACKINGH
Korten Rivier (Alloways Creek)
Maurice River
Appoquimmensi Kill (Crosswicks Creek)
Mechanpsie Kill
Passeoninghackingh
Mechanpsie Island
Burlington
Wicentapecka Kill (Assiscunk Creek)
Rancocques Kill (Rancocas Creek)
Subtenmakackingh
Panpipesingh
Aequikonagka Island
SINSESSINGH
QUINCORENING
Arwames Kill (Cooper Creek)
Manta Kill (Mantua Creek)
KANGHANICK
Aldermans Kill (Oldmans Creek)
Sepahacking
FORTS AND BLOCKHOUSES, 1623–1655.
I. Swedish Fortifications.
A. FORTS (represented by sharpcornered squares)
1) Christina, 1638–1655. 2) Nya Göteborg (New Gothenborg), 1643–1655. 3) Nya (New) Korsholm, 1647–1653. 4) Nya (New) Elfsborg, 1643–1651. 5) Trefaldighet (Trinity) (New Castle), 1654–1655.
B. BLOCKHOUSES (squares inclosed in circles)
(1) Upland, 1643 +. (2) Province (Manaiping) Island "in the Schuylkill," 1643–1647. (3) Nya (New) Vasa, 1645–1647. (4) Mölndal, 1645–1651. (5) Torne (Tårne), 1647 (?)–1655. (6) Blockhouse in front of Ft. Beversreede, 1648 +.
II. Dutch Fortifications.
(A) Nassau (Eriwomeck?) 1623–1651. (B) Beversreede, 1648–1651. (C) Casimir, 1651–1654. Blockhouse at the Schuylkill, 1633–1643 (–1647?).
III. English Fortifications.
Blockhouse at Varkens Kill (Salem, N. J.), 1641–1643. Blockhouse on Province Island, 1642.
DATES OF PERMANENT SETTLEMENTS BEFORE 1655.
I. By the Swedes.
(a) Christina (Wilmington), 1638, 1641. (b) Finland or Chamassungh, 1641, 1643. (c) Upland (Chester), 1641, 1643. (d) Printzdorp, 1643. (e) Tequirassy, 1643. (f) Tinicum, 1643. (g) Province Island, 1643. (h) Minqua's Island, 1644. (i) Kingsessing (Vasa), 1644. (j) Mölndal, 1645. (k) Torne (Aronameck), 1647(?). (m) The Sidoland (near Ft. Christina), 1654. (n) Settlement above Ft. Christina, 1654. (o) Timber Island, 1654. (p) Strandviken, 1654. (q) Ammans land, 1654.
II. By the Dutch.
(l) Sandhook (New Castle), 1651.
NAMES OF RIVERS AND PLACES.
River Delaware (De la Waer, Dellewarr, Delowar, etc.), called Delaware and Charles River by the English; Zuydt (various forms) River (South River), Nassau (?), "off old called Nassau River" (Doc., II, 86), Prince Hendrick, and Wilhelmus River by the Dutch; Södre Revieret (the South River), the Swenskes Revier (the River of the Swedes), and Nya Sweriges Rivier (the River of New Sweden) by the Swedes.
River Schuylkill (schuyl, hiding, + Kil, river or creek), called Schuylkil by the Dutch; Schuylen Kÿl (various forms) by the Swedes and Menejackse (various forms) and other names by the Indians.
Province Island (Fisher or State Island), called Manaiping, or Druweeÿland by the Swedes.
Marikes, Marikens (Marcus), Hook.
Mantas or Mantes Kill (Creek).

Amandus Johnson, "Map of New Sweden, 1638–1655," in *The Instruction for Johan Printz, Governor of New Sweden* (Swedish Colonial Society, 1930). The map depicts the locations of Molndal (in the vicinity of today's Blue Bell Tavern), Nya Vasa (Wasa), and other New Sweden settlements, forts, waterways, and landmarks.

MINQUAS' PATH
Near here the trading path leading westward to the Susquehannock Indians crossed Ridley Creek. Thousands of beaver skins were sent yearly to the first Dutch and Swedish posts on the Delaware by this route.
PENNSYLVANIA HISTORICAL AND MUSEUM COMMISSION
Beaver statue in Rose Valley. Photo by the author.

Beaver statue in Rose Valley. Photo by the author.

The bronze beaver statue was unfortunately stolen in recent years and has never been recovered. Much like the statue, the specific details of the Great Minquas Path through this area have largely disappeared with time. Yet the historical record is never necessarily complete. Perhaps one day another reference to the path will surface in an overlooked deed, survey, map, or other record and provide another piece of the puzzle. Until then, the land and waters keep their secrets.